



# Supreme Court of Illinois

November 19, 2015

## **ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT AMENDS RULE ON MANDATORY CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS**

The Illinois Supreme Court on Thursday announced changes to a rule that will require attorneys to go online to report their compliance with Mandatory Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) requirements.

Under Amended Supreme Court Rule 796, the agency that oversees the Court's MCLE program will also be able to send notices electronically. The amended rule takes effect February 1, 2016.

The changes mark the latest example of the Court's ongoing efforts to utilize technology to make the judicial process and legal profession more efficient.

"Over the past several years, the number of attorneys taking advantage of the option for electronic reporting has steadily increased," Chief Justice Rita B. Garman said. "Thus, the new rule does not impose a burden on attorneys, rather, it responds to the changes we have seen in the way in which practitioners interact with the MCLE program. Electronic reporting of continuing legal education credits will be more convenient for attorneys, more efficient for the MCLE board to process, and more economical for all involved."

The amendments to Rule 796 are similar to ones the Supreme Court approved in May to Rule 756, which now requires attorneys to register online each year with the Illinois Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission (ARDC).

The Supreme Court established MCLE requirements in September 2005 to ensure the quality of legal services in Illinois and promote civility among lawyers. Under the MCLE program, Illinois attorneys must take a minimum number of hours of continuing legal education each year.

Rule 796 requires the MCLE Board, which the Court created to administer its MCLE program, to send attorneys a notice to submit a certification stating whether he or she complied with the continuing legal education requirements or is exempt from the requirements.

Under the amended rule, the MCLE Board will have the option to send the notices to attorneys using either their preferred mailing address or email address on file with the ARDC. Attorneys will be required to submit certifications through the MCLE Board's online reporting system.

The MCLE Board has had an online reporting system in place for several years, but its use was voluntary, similar to how the ARDC allowed online registration before Rule 756 began to require it on June 1, 2015.

MCLE Board Director Karen Litscher Johnson said the Board has seen a steady increase in the voluntary use of its online reporting system over the years, from more than 65 percent of attorneys in 2010 to approximately 83 percent in 2014.

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Not only will the online requirement make the reporting process easier for attorneys and the MCLE Board, it will decrease the potential for error in the submission and collection of certifications.

The MCLE Board consists of nine volunteer members appointed by the Court, as well as a director, deputy director and staff. ARDC Administrator Jerome E. Larkin and Jayne R. Reardon, executive director of the Court's Commission on Professionalism, serve as ex officio members.

Justice Lloyd A. Karmeier is the Supreme Court's liaison to the MCLE Board and also serves as its liaison to the ARDC.

"The online registration system has worked well for ARDC," Justice Karmeier said. "The Court is optimistic that mandatory online reporting for MCLE will offer similar cost savings and efficiencies for both lawyers and the Board."

Justice Karmeier also commended the MCLE Board and its director, Ms. Johnson, for their work in formulating this proposal and bringing it to the Court's attention.

"Since the MCLE program was initiated, Ms. Johnson and the MCLE Board have been committed to improving the administration of the program," Justice Karmeier said. "This is an important next-step in that process."

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